What is claimed is:

1. A method for assisting a user in selecting and purchasing tires using computer-based communication, comprising the steps of:

    providing a database of tires, including at least information on vehicle fitment and performance characteristics;

    obtaining from the user information to determine vehicle fitment and the user's preferences of performance characteristics for the tires;

    selecting from the database, responsive to the information obtained from the user, a set of tire models corresponding to the vehicle fitment information and which most closely match the user's preferred performance characteristics; and,

    displaying to the user information and performance characteristics for the selected set of tires to permit comparison of the tires.

2. The method as claimed in claim 1, further comprising the step of displaying to the user names and locations of dealers for the selected set of tire models.

3. The method as claimed in claim 2, further comprising the step of requesting a price quote from a dealer to be delivered directly to the user for at least one of the selected set of tire models.

4. The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the step of displaying information and characteristics of the selected set of tire models includes calculating and displaying a score indicating how each tire ranks within the selected set of tire models.

5. The method as claimed in claim 1, further comprising the step of re-ordering the display of the selected set of tire models according to user provided criteria.

6. The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the step of providing the database includes the step of testing tires to obtain performance data characteristics, including at least noise, cornering, hydroplaning resistance, wet braking, and traction performance.

7. The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the step of providing the database includes the step of storing manufacturer data for each tire on make, model, size, vehicle fitments.

8. The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the step of obtaining information from the user includes posing a series of questions to the user to elicit desired information, each question requiring a choice between at least two characteristics, wherein, said characteristics correspond to characteristics associated with the tires stored in the database.

9. The method as claimed in claim 8, wherein tires are selected from the database according to a set of responses to the questions.